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(54) Title: AMUSEMENT APPARATUS		
(57) Abstract		
<p>The amusement apparatus comprises a station, typically a seat (7) or bench on which a person may sit, facing visual display means (8). The visual display means is operated by a financial transaction (e.g. by means of coin slot or card swipe), which also causes an article such as a child's toy or the like, to be vended. In a preferred embodiment, completing the financial transaction also causes the station to be driven along a predetermined path to provide an amusement ride.</p>		

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Amusement Apparatus

The present invention relates to amusement apparatus, and in particular to amusement apparatus for children.

According to the invention, there is provided amusement apparatus comprising a station arranged to be occupied by a person using the apparatus; transaction means arranged to perform a transaction representative of a financial transaction; visual display means arranged to face the station; and vending means arranged to vend an article, wherein both initiation of a predetermined visual display on the display means and vending of an article from the vending means is caused in response to completion of a transaction at the transaction means.

It is preferred that the apparatus further comprises driving means arranged to drive the station in a predetermined path of motion. Desirably, the driving means will be caused to operate in response to the completion of the transaction at the transaction means. Typically, the station and also preferably the visual display means will be supported above a platform, the driving means being arranged to drive at least the station in a path of motion over the platform. Advantageously, the path of motion is substantially cyclic such as, for example back and forth, up and down, or along a circular path.

It is preferred that the station comprises a seat, bench or the like. Advantageously the station comprises a part of a body shaped to represent an article such as an automobile, motorcycle or other vehicle or the like. Desirably, operation of the predetermined visual display, and/or of the driving means, in response to the transaction is arranged to cease after a predetermined time. Advantageously the vending means is arranged to vend a single article only in response to each transaction.

It is preferred that the visual display means comprises a screen, such as for example a video or televisual screen arranged to show a moving visual image. Advantageously the screen is arranged to reset to a default image (or sequence of images) subsequent to operation of the predetermined visual display ceasing.

-2-

The transaction means may comprise a coin operated slot feed mechanism, credit/debit card reader or the like. Such transaction means are well known in the art of amusement apparatus.

It is preferred that the vending means is arranged to vend an article to a region of the apparatus proximate the station. Desirably, the apparatus further comprises a store of vending articles, at least a part of the interior of the store preferably being visible from the exterior of the apparatus.

The invention will now be further described in a specific embodiment by way of example only with reference to the accompanying drawing which is a schematic representation of amusement apparatus according to the invention.

Referring to the drawing, there is shown amusement apparatus 1 in the form of a children's ride formed in the shape of a vehicle 2. Vehicle 2 is mounted by means of hydraulic supports 3, 4 above a mounting platform 5. The vehicle includes a cab 6 provided with a seat or station 7 arranged to face the screen of a video unit 8. To the rear of the cab 6, the sides of vehicle 2 provide a housing 9 within which are stored a number of vending articles (not shown). Window 10 enables the vending articles in the interior of housing 9 to be visible from the exterior of the apparatus. Housing 9 also contains a vending mechanism (of generally conventional configuration) arranged to dispense individual vending articles contained in the store via vending port 11.

A transaction point 12 (typically coin slot or debit/credit card swipe module) is positioned in the interior of cab 6. When the user performs the required financial transaction, an appropriate signal is sent from transaction point 12 to a microprocessor unit 13 mounted in the interior of the forward end of vehicle 2. Appropriate signals from the microprocessor unit 13 are then sent to the video unit 8 which plays a series of visual images (such as a short cartoon or the like) on the screen. Signals from microprocessor 13 also cause a single vending article to be dispensed by the vending mechanism from the store in housing 9 to the vending part 11. Signals from microprocessor 13 in addition are used to initiate driving of the

-3-

hydraulic supports 3, 4 to produce a ride effect by causing the vehicle to move up and down above platform 5.

After a predetermined time, the microprocessor either simultaneously, or in a predetermined sequence, discontinues the playing of the visual images on video unit 8 and driving of hydraulic supports 3, 6. The apparatus is then maintained in its stationary "default" status whilst awaiting a further user to complete a financial transaction at transaction point 12. Whilst in "default" status, the microprocessor typically runs through a " default" sequence in which predetermined segments of visual image sequences are displayed on the video unit as an enticement to prospective users.

The apparatus may furthermore be provided with an audio unit (which may comprise a part of the video unit 8) arranged to produce appropriate sounds whilst the apparatus is in use.

-4-

CLAIMS:

1. Amusement apparatus comprising a station arranged to be occupied by a person using the apparatus; transaction means arranged to perform a transaction representative of a financial transaction; visual display means arranged to face the station; and vending means arranged to vend an article, wherein both initiation of a predetermined visual display on the display means and vending of an article from the vending means is caused in response to completion of a transaction at the transaction means.
2. Amusement apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the apparatus further comprises driving means arranged to drive the station in a predetermined path of motion.
3. Amusement apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the driving means operates in response to the completion of the transaction at the transaction means.
4. Amusement apparatus according to claim 2 or claim 3, wherein the path of motion is substantially cyclic.
5. Amusement apparatus according to any preceding claim, wherein the station comprises a seat.
6. Amusement apparatus according to any preceding claim, wherein the station comprises a part of a body shaped to represent a vehicle.
7. Amusement apparatus according to any preceding claim, which is arranged such that operation of the predetermined visual display in response to the transaction ceases after a predetermined time has elapsed.

-5-

8. Amusement apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the visual display means is arranged to reset to a default image subsequent to operation of the predetermined visual display ceasing.
9. Amusement apparatus according to any of claims 3 to 7, wherein the driving means is arranged to cease after a predetermined time has elapsed from effecting the transaction.
10. Amusement apparatus according to any preceding claim, wherein the visual display means comprises a screen arranged to show a moving visual image.
11. Amusement apparatus according to any preceding claim, wherein the vending means is arranged to vend an article to a region of the apparatus proximate the station.
12. Amusement apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the station comprises a seat, the vending means being arranged to vend an article at a location below the seat.
13. Amusement apparatus according to any preceding claim, wherein the apparatus further comprises a store of vending articles.
14. Amusement apparatus according to claim 13, wherein at least a part of the interior of the store is visible from the exterior of the apparatus.

1/1

